



9110-04-P

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Coast Guard

33 CFR Part 117

[Docket No. USCG-2014-0483]

Drawbridge Operation Regulations; Elizabeth River, Eastern Branch, VA

AGENCY: Coast Guard, DHS.

ACTION: Notice of temporary deviation from regulations; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Coast Guard has issued a temporary deviation from the regulation governing the operation of the SR 175 Bridge across Lewis Channel and Black Narrows, mile 3.5, at Chincoteague, VA. This deviation will be a test to change the drawbridge operation schedule to determine whether a permanent change to the schedule is needed. This deviation will require the bridge to open on demand at all times.

DATES: This deviation is effective from 6 a.m. on August 4, 2014 through midnight on November 3, 2014.

Comments and related material must be received by the Coast Guard on or before October 2, 2014.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments identified by docket number USCG-2014-0483 using any one of the following

methods:

(1) Federal eRulemaking Portal:

<http://www.regulations.gov>.

(2) Fax: 202-493-2251.

(3) Mail: Docket Management Facility (M-30), U.S.

Department of Transportation, West Building Ground Floor,
Room W12-140, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington, DC,
20590-0001. Deliveries accepted between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.,
Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. The
telephone number is (202) 366-9329.

See the "Public Participation and Request for
Comments" portion of the SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION section
below for instructions on submitting comments. To avoid
duplication, please use only one of these methods.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: If you have questions on
this test deviation, call or e-mail Kashanda Booker, Bridge
Specialist, Fifth Coast Guard District, telephone (757)
398-6227, e-mail Kashanda.L.Booker@uscg.mil. If you have
questions on viewing or submitting material to the docket,
call Cheryl Collins, Program Manager, Docket Operations,
telephone (202) 366-9826.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

A. Public Participation and Request for Comments

We encourage you to participate in this rulemaking by submitting comments and related materials. All comments received will be posted, without change, to <http://www.regulations.gov> and will include any personal information you have provided.

1. Submitting comments

If you submit a comment, please include the docket number for this rulemaking (USCG-2014-0483), indicate the specific section of this document to which each comment applies, and provide a reason for each suggestion or recommendation. You may submit your comments and material online (<http://www.regulations.gov>), or by fax, mail or hand delivery, but please use only one of these means. If you submit a comment online via <http://www.regulations.gov>, it will be considered received by the Coast Guard when you successfully transmit the comment. If you fax, hand delivery, or mail your comment, it will be considered as having been received by the Coast Guard when it is received at the Docket Management Facility. We recommend that you include your name and a mailing address, an e-mail address, or a phone number in the body of your document so that the Coast Guard can contact you if we have questions regarding your submission.

To submit your comment online, go to type the docket number [USCG-2014-0483], in the "SEARCH" box and click "SEARCH." Click on "Submit a Comment" on the line associated with this rulemaking. If you submit your comments by mail or hand delivery, submit them in an unbound format, no larger than 8½ by 11 inches, suitable for copying and electronic filing. If you submit them by mail and would like to know that they reached the Facility, please enclose a stamped, self-addressed postcard or envelope. We will consider all comments and material received during the comment period and may change the rule based on your comments.

2. Viewing comments and documents

To view comments, as well as documents mentioned in this preamble as being available in the docket, go to <http://www.regulations.gov>, type the docket number (USCG-2014-0483) in the "SEARCH" box and click SEARCH. Click on Open Docket Folder on the line associated with this rulemaking. You may also visit the Docket Management Facility in Room W12-140 on the ground floor of the Department of Transportation West Building, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20590, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

3. Privacy Act

Anyone can search the electronic form of comments received into any of our dockets by the name of the individual submitting the comment (or signing the comment, if submitted on behalf of an association, business, labor union, etc.). You may review a Privacy Act notice regarding our public dockets in the January, 17, 2008, issue of the Federal Register (73 FR 3316).

4. Public Meeting

We do not now plan to hold a public meeting. You may submit a request for one on or before October 2, 2014, using one of the four methods specified under ADDRESSES. Please explain why one would be beneficial. If the Coast Guard determines that a public meeting would aid this rulemaking, they will hold one at a time and place announced by a later notice in the Federal Register.

Basis and Purpose

Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), who owns and operates SR 175 Bridge across Lewis Channel and Black Narrows, mile 3.5, at Chincoteague, VA requested a temporary change to the existing bridge regulations, set out at 33 CFR 117.1005, to test a new schedule. In 2011, the new single-leaf bascule bridge was constructed on a new alignment replacing the former swing-type bridge that was

located downstream from the Chincoteague maritime community. The new bridge alignment resulted in boaters having an improved channel access and the number of necessary bridge openings reduced.

In the closed position to vessels, the single-span bascule bridge has vertical clearance of 15 feet above mean high water.

The current operating schedule allows the draw to open on demand from midnight to 6 a.m., and every one and a half hours from 6 a.m. to midnight (at 6 a.m., 7:30 a.m., 9 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 12 p.m., 1:30 p.m., 3 p.m., 4:30 p.m., 6 p.m., 7:30 p.m., 9 p.m., 10:30 p.m., and midnight); except from 7 a.m., to 5 p.m. on the last consecutive Wednesday and Thursday in July, the draw need not be opened. This has been the regular operating schedule since November, 16, 2006.

The SR 175 Bridge is the only vehicular connection between the mainland and Eastern Shore of Virginia and Chincoteague Island. Tourism is a dominant industry of Chincoteague Island with activities taking place in the Town of Chincoteague, Chincoteague Island and Assateague Island.

Based on the decrease amount of vessel openings, the Chincoteague maritime community and the Accomack County

Board of Supervisors favored a less restrictive opening schedule by proposing a test deviation from scheduled openings to an "on demand" schedule while still balancing the needs of marine and vehicular traffic. The monthly vessel openings at the SR 175 Bridge submitted by VDOT are as follows:

BRIDGE OPENING COUNTS

APR 2013	MAY 2013	JUNE 2013	JUL 2013	AUG 2013	SEPT 2013	OCT 2013	NOV 2013	DEC 2013	JAN 2014	FEB 2014	MAR 2014	APR 2014
1	4	7	7	7	6	7	3	2	0	0	0	3

The bridge logs revealed that from April 2013 to April 2014, the SR 175 Bridge had experienced only 47 total vessel openings. The vessels consist of commercial fishing, motorboats, sailboats, trawlers and yachts.

The Test Schedule

From August 4, 2014, to November 3, 2014, the draw of the SR 175 Bridge, mile 3.5, at Chincoteague, shall open on signal in accordance with the general operating regulations set out at 33 CFR 117.5.

During this test deviation, VDOT will gather data on vessel openings in hopes of eliminating the current operating schedule for vessel passage.

Additional Information

This deviation has been coordinated with the waterway users transiting in this area and there is no expectation

of any significant impacts on navigation. Vessels with mast heights of less than 15 feet, above mean high water, can continue to pass underneath the bridge in the closed position.

In accordance with 33 CFR 117.35(e), the drawbridge must return to its regular operating schedule immediately at the end of the effective period of this temporary deviation.

This deviation from the operating regulations is
authorized under 33 CFR 117.35.

Dated: June 30, 2014

WAVERLY W. GREGORY, JR.
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Fifth Coast Guard District

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